1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

184 which ended with his unsuccessful rebellion of 1929,
423 much land was "rest-gult", and there were many kinds of tax exemptions for heirs of veterans, who often paid only the tithe on grain and a small tax on cattle.

In Begemdir province (capital: Gondar), most of the land also remains unmeasured, for the same reason. Much of the land is "rest" owned by kin groups who guard it jealously against alienation; and the old church lands are are regarded as "rest". In the southwestern, lower, section of Gondar town and some nearby rural land, "rest" is owned by Ethiopian Muslims, mostly traders, who purchased it from the church, long ago. In scattered rural areas some families of ethnic specialists like the Falasha smiths own land considered "rest-gult", given to their ancestors in reward for services rendered Menelik's armies in the 19th century. This process has been discontinued (artisans are now in business for themselves and are supposed to pay a trade tax to the central government), and most Falashas live under very uncertain terms of tenure, paying tithe and other taxes, which worries the Amhara claimants to this territory.

F. Crown Lands and Efforts to Centralize Land Tenure.

423
456 In the old tradition of land tenure, the king held some very personal land, inherited or conquered, for the support of the royal household, "mād-bēt". He added to it by confiscating land of unsuccessful feudal rebels.

423 He could do with "mād-bēt" lands as he pleased, without
656 interference from kin groups, the church, or other local-feudal dynasties.

654 Thus the present emperor, when he was still merely
656 regent, and a young man in his twenties, began his pro-
423 gram of modernization and centralization in his own "mad-bet" in Harar province. He organized the coffee-growing of that area as a cash crop for export, and, more significantly, reduced the burdens on the "gabbar", improved security of tenure, appointed supervisors to see that matters would not slip back, and instructed them to report to him as the central power. He also set up elementary schools in several locations. At regular intervals he toured his lands personally. As a result, "gabbar" from neighboring feudal estates were eager to have the protection of his "mād-bēt".

423 These efforts were a departure from the traditional
656 pattern of high feudal nobles on their "mād-bēt" (though, on the other hand, no one could criticize him for doing as he pleased on his own "household land"). The others appointed trustees, "tăwălaj", usually 12, to administer their land, while they remained absentee landlords at the court of the "king of kings". These trustees were u usually appointed from patriarchal elders and lowest nobility, and were responsible for the support of the parish churches of their area, with priest, deacons, dăbtăra (scribe-choristers), etc.

423 In the traditional pattern there was another means
651 of exercising some central control, through the collection

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

of land taxes and tithe, provided these were not entirely claimed by powerful local feudal nobility or the church. These tax-collectors, who often lived dangerously, were given land as reward for services; this land was called "mälkäña" land. They also acted as overseers of statute-labor, "hudäd". They were usually free from both land tax and tithe on their own territory, and, although their sons could inherit the job and the land that went with it, their security of tenure was even weaker than that of the "gultäñña". Partly this was due to the ever-shifting power factors, for, when the central power was weak or distracted by a distant war, the tax-collector might find himself working as a provincial functionary, intermediate between the cheqa shum (headman) and the provincial feudal lords.

When central power was greatly strengthened in the days of Menelik II, there was a considerable increase in "malkana" lands. This was particularly the case in lands he had conquered from the Galla landlords ("balbat"). He expropriated 3/4 of their lands for distribution among his military veterans, but in consolation granted the balbats the remaining 1/4 as "mälkäña" land. This freed them from taxes, enabled them to pass their remaining landholdings on to their sons, and turned them into loyal subjects of the central power which alone could protect their tenure from future expropriation. The outcome of this amazingly Solomonic solution of an age-old problem of land tenure in a feudal country has turned the Galla balbats today into the most reliable

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

423 652 supporters of the central government.

The descendants of these balbats, now educated in 423 447 651 the high schools of Addis Ababa, are being sent into even the old-Amhara provinces at present, by Emperor Haile Selassie, to act as salaried collectors for the central treasury ("Gemja-Bet") (so that the function of the former malkana has again come full circle, though the term is no longer used for the office). In fact, the new centralized tax-gathering has ended the office of the old, provincial "mälkäña", and they, much like the "gultäñña", can only hope to have their lands affirmed as "rest". This they can hope to achieve only if they work the lands themselves and pay tithe on produce, otherwise it may be lost to squatters. Their final security of tenure, by contract instead of vague status (they have lost the latter), will come only when the lands are measured and modern titles issued, which has not yet happened in the old-Amhara areas that resist this. The non-resistant Galla balbats of Shoa province are thus more secure in tenure, and will remain so as long as the central govern- is strong.

423 804 Measurement of land is called, traditionally, "throwing the rope" ("yaṣe gämäd"). This rope may be made of cordage, plant fibers, traditionally 40 elbow lengths long. In northern districts it is sometimes made of plaited oxhide, and called "qälad".

423 The "rope was thrown" widely in Galla lands conquered by Menelik II, Three-quarters of these lands were then divided into gashas of 80-100 acres each, and

583 pecting this, screams loudly, making the "capture" official.
184 After some days or weeks, the husband officially informs the bride's parents that he has consummated the marriage and intends to keep the bride as his wife; whereupon the bride's kin can pretend to "give in" and make the best out of the "damage done" without much loss of face, by agreeing to an official "semanya", without a big feast or cows, or "boasting" the "fukkara". But otherwise the legal procedure is that of "semanya", with the cheqa shum present.

[589] A spinster is so rare that she seems non-existant, unless sick and handicapped so that she cannot function as a wife. Therefore, a spinster would be mocked and suspected of hidden ailments. To prevent this, a poor or unpopular girl might ask her kin or spokesman to seek a poor man and ask him "to abduct" her.

582 The new, modern laws have made little attempt to change these
656 traditional forms of marriage, beyond trying to acknowledge and "normalize" them. The new minimum age of marriage is legal at 15 for girls, 18 for boys, but this is generally ignored and evaded in
[584] the rural areas where girls still marry at 13 and 14. Through indirect means, the Emperor Haile Selassie has also urged that boys and girls should see more of each other before marriage, have a longer and formal courtship.

178 Very recently, two differing attitudes have developed among
871 young men educated in the modern school system, toward marriage
581 with educated girls. In the provincial towns, the (semi-educated) young men, who have finished elementary school or 7 grades, say that girls who have finished as little as 4 or 5 grades of elementary school consider themselves "educated", are proud, and tell their

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

178 631 64 565 program not supervised by the Emperor, since any official's budding projects tend to be undone by his successor, whether because of personal vendetta, orders from the Emperor himself, or simply difference of approach. Thus has Haile Selassie been able to make sure that no one besides himself demonstrates any sort of leadership that might be attractive to the public.

At the same time his appointments have been made in such a way as to insure a balance of power—or impotence—favorable to his absolute control. By consistently appointing enemies to adjacent positions he has built in checks upon the behavior and sentiments of his higher officials. He has relied on mutual jealousies and conflicting ambitions to cause each to report anything incriminating he can find on the other. When appointees in the same branch of government have shown undue co-operation and friendliness, he has at times provoked friction between them.

In addition to the checks and balances of the *shum-shir* system, the Emperor has made use of an extensive intelligence system to keep watch over those in office and out. Not only the operations of the regular security departments [625] of the Ministry of Interior and the police, but also some of his closer advisers have had their own personal networks, financed by moneys diverted from various government departments.

178 565 656 472 Other measures have been used to check the independence of businessmen. Money has been arbitrarily taken from them by the imposition of fines, confiscation of property, and through requests for contributions for charitable causes. A few private entrepreneurs who have been too successful have been forced into government service. Licenses have been revoked, in some cases given to foreigners rather than to prosperous Ethiopians. Dividends from commercial enterprises have been withheld, or given to others whom the Emperor favored. (Rather than appear unduly wealthy, some Ethiopian investors have preferred to use Greeks, Armenians, and Arabs as the nominal heads of their enterprises.)

178 565 554 [177] [829] Due to their relative proximity to the Emperor, their patronage powers, their wealth, and in some cases their family background, the members of the new nobility command considerable deference, particularly in Addis Ababa. Their Westernized style of life (itself modeled to a great extent on the Emperor's habits) has set new standards for modernizing Ethiopia. At the same time they are the objects of much stereotyped hostility. The people in the country, and the commoners of the towns, regard them as oppressive and unsympathetic. Their logic often runs: "The big men around the court are no good; only the Emperor is for us." The intellectuals see them as reactionary, selfish, and corrupt. The massacre of some fifteen members of the new nobility as the final act of the abortive coup d'état in 1960 was an expression of this latter judgment.

178 565 643 662 The chief advantage of the new nobility—their relative enjoyment of im-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

than those necessary to perform their jobs. They do not attempt to maintain and build personal libraries, though there are a few exceptions to this. The three small bookstores in Addis Ababa offer only the most insubstantial fare.

Nor, finally, have more than a handful of private individuals taken upon themselves the charge of a scholarly or literary calling. Although Marcel Cohen heralded the birth of a printed literature in Amharic as early as 1925,[48] writing is still not very important on the Ethiopian scene.* The output of original books and pamphlets in Amharic averaged less than fifteen a year over the past two decades. The presses and bookstores distribute Amharic publications indifferently at best. Much of the literary impetus produced by the desire of many Ethiopians to write, and the obvious need for good writing that would address itself to the intellectual demands of the present generation, has been sapped by economic, political, and cultural factors.

The economic factors include the high cost of printing; the diminutive market; and the absence of publishing houses. If an author wants to be read, he must normally pay for publication himself. Those who cannot must either find a patron in the Crown—frequently a highly lucrative arrangement—or resort to mimeographic duplication, or else remain unpublished. The censorship system and anxiety about spontaneous expression of any sort which has been fostered by prevailing political conditions constitute additional obstacles to literary development.

The paucity of serious writing has been the result no less of prevailing cultural conditions. The low intellectual level of his potential audience, the absence of channels for criticism, and the dearth of precedent make it difficult for the Ethiopian writer to determine good standards of writing. The confused state of Amharic, owing to regional variations and the absence of consensus on neologisms and loan words for expressing modern concepts, poses many problems on the level of sheer vocabulary. The temptation to get into print quickly, if the financial and political barriers can be hurdled, exceeds the temptation to work long and hard on an opus of quality. The desire to pontificate frequently eclipses the quest for understanding.

Those conditions which have inhibited the growth of Amharic literature—poverty, governmental reluctance to provide sufficient freedom and support, the newness of the modernizing culture, and the motivational level of the intellectuals themselves—may be viewed more broadly as responsible for the relative barrenness of Ethiopian intellectual life as a whole. Insofar as these conditions change in the coming decades, a radical change in the quality and organization of Ethiopian intellectual life may be expected. As a sociological

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* This is no longer due, however, to the negative attitude toward writing as such which was discussed in chapter iii. That traditional inhibition has been largely removed—primarily, it seems, by the postwar requirement that all legal accusations and court proceedings be set down in writing.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

But this gentle, paternal control has been backstopped by more rigorous sanctions. Censorship controls assure that anything that is published is highly flattering of the government. Intelligence networks keep intellectuals from speaking their minds and developing them through open exchange with others. Associations have in general not been permitted to form, or else have been saturated with government informers. Coupled with these repressive measures has been the policy of making appointments dependent on the extent to which one curries favor with the Emperor directly, or one of the new nobles who is high in favor at a given time. The intellectuals, no less than the new nobility, have been kept in line by *shum-shir* and *divide et impera*. "We have been kept from acting," said one remorseful returnee, "by fear and the sweetness of office."

In the political order sustained by the rule of Haile Selassie, the paramountcy of loyalty to the imperial government as a value has precluded the ascendance of values of national development and technical competence, values it is the peculiar burden of the intelligentsia to bear and assert. In this situation a vicious cycle of mutual mistrust has developed between the government and the intellectuals. Although the articulation of standards and the expression of criticism are important functions of intellectuals, the Emperor has tended to regard all expressions of criticism which reflect on the government, which is his personal government, as expressions of filial ingratitude at best, and at worst as signs of subversion. The intellectuals, in turn, have accepted this definition of the situation and have tended to assume—after some disheartening experiences in the course of the fifties—that is was not plausible for them to express criticism in a framework of basic loyalty to the regime. Distrust fed distrust, and antagonism mounted. The abortive coup d'état of December, 1960, was but the most outspoken and violent expression of this.

This growth of antagonism to the government has seeped down among the students. The feeling has become increasingly widespread among students at home and abroad that genuine service to the nation and the performance of technical functions are incompatible with a loyal and secure existence under the present regime. Thus, one student in a Western country said in 1961: "I am afraid to return to Ethiopia. I fear that I shall either lose all my principles, as so many of my friends seem to have done, or that I shall end up without a job or in prison."

ETHIOPIA'S DILEMMA

Haile Selassie has often proclaimed his devotion to a program of modernization. His personal achievements in this direction have been substantial: the establishment of much modern bureaucratic machinery, the institution of a parliament and electoral procedures, a mild degree of industrialization, and, above all, the provision of a modern secular education for thousands of young people.